

# THE GENIAL IDIOT, He Waxeth Poetic.

By John Kendrick Bangs

"GOOD morning, Mr. Idiot," observed the Landlady as the Idiot entered the breakfast room. "I hope you slept well last night."

"Very," said the Idiot, "but I had dreams, madame, dreams of the arctic region. I thought first that my name was Peary or Disappeary, or something of that kind, and that I had been employed by the Barbers' Trust to seek the pole, cut it down, paint it to resemble a peppermint stick and bring it back to civilization to be set up before the head offices of the Amalgamated Brotherhood of Chin Scrapers. I had reached the pole, had cut it down and was in the very act of painting the glorious red stripe of our country's flag upon it when a huge polar bear appeared before me, upset the paint pot upon the rich iridescence of the aurora borealis, and was just about to engulf me in its cavernous jaws when I waked up."

"Extraordinary dream," said Mr. Brief. "Been eating Welsh rabbits again?"

"No," said the Idiot. "There were no blankets on my bed and this is chill October."

Mrs. Pedagog smiled pleasantly upon the Idiot.

"I acknowledge my delinquency, Mr. Idiot," she said. "I am sorry if you were made uncomfortable."

"Don't mention it, Mrs. Pedagog," returned the Idiot suavely. "I cherish no resentment. Fact is, madame, I hadn't thought of the thing myself, so why should you? Only in view of the uncertainties of Indian summer I think it would be well if you were to

provide our rooms with Navejo blankets. Then we shall be prepared for any emergency—but isn't it fine that October has decided to come back again? Jingo—but it is the month of months for me! I love it, don't you, Mr. Joet? Everything crisps up so. Life is like a leaf of fresh Escarole. The trees take on a semblance of tried and mellowed vigor. The air is bracing, and the knee of man weakened as to his cap by a prolonged debauch of summer days, braces, chirps up a bit and evinces a willingness to do its share of the business of life.

"The russet's o'er the heather, And the punkin' gins to grin, And we find the Autumn weather As polished as a pin. There is red upon the treetop, And there's quinine in the air, For it's dear old chill October, Everywhere!"

"Very nice, Mr. Idiot, very nice indeed," said the Poet. "I never heard that poem before."

"Neither did I," said the Idiot. "Here's another from the same author:

"Moan as ye please, ye Autumn wind, Moan and moan and groan, I find ye pleasing to me mind As I sit here alone; For as ye wall and wall and wall, And rise until ye Autumn gale I fancy myself assailed, As if I were a leaf of fall. A zone where 'spite a certain chill, There's naught to make me really ill, And breezes fast and breezes still, Set hearts a-thrill. The breeze that blows and blows with zest, And shows the country at its best, And turns to russet all the leaves, Is not the breeze that grieves. The promise 'tis that everywhere,

Blest by the crisp, sweet Autumn air, Tho' we lack wealth, We still have health— Whose wealth Brings richer things than health? Egan, as long as I rest sober Give me the glad winds of October!"

"Dear me, Mr. Idiot," cried the Poet, "you really should not waste that—may I not have it?"

"Doesn't belong to me," said the Idiot. "Sold it already. Bought a fall derby with the proceeds."

"My poems, let me tell you flat, Keep me in socks and derby hats. My Autumn song of fledgling scholars Pays for my coming winter's collars. A sonnet on the Springtime dews Has kept me well in summer shoes; And with my triolet on 'Chance' I've bought my pants."

And now, when chill October comes, Foretelling winter and its sounding drums, An Epic 'tis my effort to uproll To pay the man who brings my coal. A trioler chock full of thrilling scenes Once kept a Boston man in beans— So why should not my Rondeau on 'The Martyrs' Suffice for my suspenders and my garters?"

Egan, my friend, the Muse now she has caught me, According to my needs must she support me. And if she fails to do her duty well, Why she can go—Well, she can rest a spell. Until she's learned what is her bounden duty— The Little Beauty!"

"I don't see that that means anything," said the Poet, "and I've followed you pretty closely."

"Of course you don't," retorted the Idiot. "That's why I think it would go well in a Magazine."

"I know," said the Poet. "But don't you think in view of the fact that there are so many writers of Magazine poetry and so few writers of good poetry that instead of emulating the many you would do better to imitate the few?"

"There is something in that idea," said the Idiot. "At the same time it pays to raise chickens at a time when there is a demand for broilers. I have watched the poultry market for several years and I have discovered that the only poets who have become great have been those who have written lines that to the ordinary mind don't mean anything until the thirty-eighth

reading. The idea is that the reader uses up seven or eight copies of the Magazine that prints the poetry trying to find out what it is all about."

"That may be or not be true," said the Poet. "But why should you, with a nice knack at rhymes and a comfortable salary on Wall street, bother your head with trying to do the commercial thing? Instead of going into competition with men like Yeats and Bloodgood Cutter and Marie Perkins Bledkinsop, strike out in your own vein and say the plain thing in good verse. I like you line."

"Egan, as long as I keep sober I'll sing the praises of October—"

It's bully. Keep the thing up, and by and by you'll cease to be an Idiot and find yourself a poet."

"Good idea," said the Idiot, musing. "As for keeping it up—that's easy. Just to prove it, here goes:

"As long, indeed, as I remember I've loved the days of rare November—"

December—"

September—"

I've cheered our grand old January—"

February—"

As long as I've had veins of starch I've worn the hat of March—"

As long as Nature makes my shape a thrill With Springtime joys, O give me—"

"Eh? That the idea?"

The Poet lapsed into discouraged silence.

"He had trouble along about August," continued the Idiot, "but he didn't notice. August is an awfully hard word to find a rhyme to."

"But O my hopes all turn to sawdust When on the calendar comes August—"

is all I can think of at the moment. Do you think that is good poetry, Mr. Poet?"

"No, I don't," snapped the Poet. "It

seems to me sometimes," he added, "that I deliberately misunderstand you. I don't care a rap about your technique—it is frankly rotten, but you have an appreciation of the moods of nature that is rather different from that of the average stockbroker. When I advise you to keep a thing up, I don't mean to advise you to run it into the ground. Don't keep on selling the same old stock short all the time. Maintain your mood—your optimism and give it expression in a felicitous manner."

"Oh, I see," said the Idiot. "You want me to go on being lucid in my own foolish way."

"That's it," said the Poet. "Don't be bound down by any literary conventions. Use your own terminology. Be yourself. Browning, for instance, would never have used the term 'chick full, but you can do it with perfect impunity. Tennyson would have referred to panis, but there is no harm in your doing so—and so on. The word of freedom; express your thoughts which are worth expressing freely."

"I catch on," said the Idiot. "Sort of—"

I do not care a Tinker's tuss, You must take me as I am—"

business, eh?"

"That's it, only you needn't even use the word 'tuss.' Tinker's Dam is not profane," said the Poet.

"Thank you," said the Idiot. "I'll remember this good advice of yours—"

and it is good. Be myself, eh? Don't imitate anybody else, eh?"

"Yes," said the Poet.

"Well, why don't you do the same thing yourself, Mr. Poet?" asked the Idiot.

"Too late," signed the Poet. "I began wrong, by trying to do my work as somebody else would have done it—first Browning, then Whitman, and now—"

"Well, never mind, old man," said

the Idiot, affectionately. "I'd rather read one line of yours than any forty of Browning's, and personally I like you better than Whitman, whom I never met. Meanwhile listen to this:

"No matter what the month may be, I'm happy as the jumping flea. Because, according to my plan, I always do the best I can; And if I don't do better—why, I ain't at all the fault of I. But of some force, oh, bless your soul, That's far beyond my poor control. If I'd my way I'd do such things As would embarrass queens and kings. I'd be a soldier greater far Than Bonaparte or old Cae-sar; I'd be a novelist so big As Thackeray'd be on the nig. I'd be a scientist so fit That Newton's name would stand for Nit."

I'd be a sailor so renowned That C. Columbus would be found So low among the immigrants They'd send him back to get his pants. I'd be a Poet so inspired That Mister Browning would be fired From off the staff of any sheet From Poncekag to Hester street. I'd be—oh, thunder! what's the use? If I were greese I'd be a goose. So big you couldn't stuff his ears With all the apple sauce of years! But as it is I'm even must be The thing the Fates have chose for me, And since I do the best I can, I'm big as any other man. Who takes the tools that Nature gives And wheels them well the while, he lives."

"First rate philosophy," said the Poet.

"Thank you," said the Idiot. "I'm glad to have that criticism, for I believe that if Poets will take care of their philosophy their poems will take care of themselves."

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## A CHAFING DISH LUNCHEON

BY C. C. BEDFORD.

Dainty cooking and dainty methods in cooking are appreciated by both men and women and a woman never shows off to better advantage than when presiding over a chafing dish. Such cookery is appropriate for any meal save dinner, and chafing dish outfits can be had at prices to suit any sort of purse. Forethought in planning will make this luncheon feasible for a party of six, especially if they are intimate friends with plenty of experience to recount and exchange.

Fruit Salpicon. Fish a la Creole. Potato Puffs. Sliced Cucumbers. Finger Rolls. Baked Tomatoes. Celery and Nut Salad. Delicate Pudding. Tea or Cocoa.

On the day preceding the luncheon order a good sized leg of mutton and roast it, allowing about twelve minutes to the pound so that it will be rare. Set it aside over-night. If halibut or any fresh fish is to be used boil or steam it until barely done, seasoning the water used with salt, pepper, a bit of bay leaf and a small onion; halibut, cod or other firm fleshed fish is best, but salmon, shrimp or any canned variety may be used.

Fish and mutton are the two dishes

to be prepared at the table and it will expedite matters if a separate tray can be devoted to each. Have each ingredient prepared in proper shape for immediate use, arrange on a pretty plate or small bowl; measure out the seasonings on butter plates or in tiny Japanese bowls. Such forethought gives an attractive appearance to the tray when brought to the table. Be sure to have a metal tray under the chafing dish, then, should the lighted lamp overflow—as it has been known to do—or any accident occur the cloth will not be marred by fire or spilling. Should the flame in the lamp burn low be sure to completely extinguish it before attempting to refill with alcohol. That such precautions are not unnecessary is borne out by too frequent tales of accidents entailing serious consequences.

Having planned for the dining room service we are free to attend to the details of the meal, and as it must be thoroughly chilled, the dessert will receive first attention. Open a can of apricots and drain off one cupful and a third of the syrup; add to it the juice of one lemon, heat to the boiling point and stir in sufficient sugar to make pleasantly sweet. Dissolve three tablespoonsful of corn starch in enough water to make a thin paste,

turn quickly into the boiling liquid and stir until it is thick, then cover and cook very slowly for ten minutes. Separate the whites and yolks of three eggs; to the whites add a pinch of salt, whip to a stiff froth and stir into the mixture on the fire. Stir slowly for three minutes then take off, add two cupfuls of the apricots cut in bits and turn into half a dozen wetted molds. To the yolks of the eggs, add three tablespoonsful of granulated sugar and one cupful and a half of scalding hot milk. Stir over the fire in a double boiler until thickened to a custard, then strain, add a teaspoonful of vanilla and Is this the sauce to serve with the pudding.

Shell sufficient English walnuts to give a heaping cupful of meats. Pour the boiling water over them, let stand for a moment and drain, add more boiling water to cover with one-half of a teaspoonful of salt and a slice of onion, boil rapidly for ten minutes. Rinse and let stand in cold water until ready to use. Wash the blanched celery stalks and keep on ice until needed. Beat the yolks of three eggs, add three tablespoonsful of cold water and four of vinegar, one-third of a teaspoonful of salt and a dash of cayenne and stir over the fire in a double boiler until very thick. Beat in two tablespoonsful of butter and put away. In making the salad to this dressing take an equal quantity of stiffly whipped cream and mix a part of it with the nuts (dried on a cloth), and finely cut celery, putting the remainder over the top of the salad when arranged in a bowl and garnished with tufts of the celery leaves.

From the stem ends of large, firm tomatoes cut pieces the size of a silver dollar and with a spoon scoop out the centers. Fill with equal parts of fine bread crumbs and chopped cold boiled ham highly seasoned with salt, pepper, onion juice and chopped parsley; to each cupful of the mixture add two tablespoonsful of melted butter. Half an hour will bake them if the oven is hot.

Select large well shaped potatoes and scrub them thoroughly, then bake in a quick oven. Let stand for five minutes, then cut in halves lengthwise and scoop out the meaty interior. Mash it quickly beating in, for each pint one tablespoonful of butter, a good seasoning of salt and pepper and enough hot cream to make smooth. Beat until very light, then stir in the stiffly-whipped whites of two eggs. Heap in the shells. They are replaced in the oven long enough to heat through and color the tops a pretty brown. For the salpicon, which takes the place of soup as a first course, take such fruits as are procurable; a mixture of peaches, plums, tokay or white grapes, would do nicely; peel and cut the larger fruits into bits, split and seed the grapes. Add sufficient orange juice to moisten and powdered sugar to sweeten; stand away until icy cold. This is served in sherbet or champagne glasses and should be on the table when luncheon is announced. Two heaping cupfuls of prepared fish will be needed; if halibut or cod it is

to be broken in large flakes. Shrimps (canned) should be rinsed in cold water, dried on a cloth and cut in halves; salmon must have skin and bones removed. Beside the fish have on the tray on separate dishes one-half cupful of strong clear stock, one-half cupful of thick stewed tomato, one tablespoonful of chopped green pepper, one teaspoonful of chopped onion, one heaping tablespoonful of butter, one tablespoonful of flour, one small bay leaf, one-half teaspoonful of salt and a dash of cayenne. While the salpicon is being eaten light the lamp under the blazer, put in the butter, green pepper, onion and bay leaf, cover and cook for two minutes; add the stock and stir until thickened; add the tomato and seasoning, stir and cook for a moment. Drop in the fish, put the hot water pan underneath, cover and let cook for five minutes.

If but one chafing dish is to be used, have it removed and cleaned as soon as the fish is served. When it is returned it is to be accompanied by the second tray, containing a plateful of thick slices of rare mutton (cut from the center of the leg), a half cupful of currant jelly, a half cupful of dish gravy (reheated), four tablespoonsful of port or sherry, a half teaspoonful of port or sherry, salt and pepper. Put the French mustard, salt and pepper. Put the gravy and mustard in the blazer, add the jelly and wine and cover until the mixture boils. Season and lay in half a dozen slices at once. Cook for two minutes, then serve with a spoonful of the gravy. Cook as many more slices as will be required.

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## CATCHING FISH BY POISON IN GALILEE

(New York Sun.)

In a party which left Canada some months ago for a visit to the Holy Land was an enthusiastic fisherman, who has sent back an account of a trip to the lake of Genesaret, or sea of Galilee, and of the ways of the fishermen there.

The waters of the lake fairly teem with fish, though very little fishing has been done there of late years. They are salt and a dash of cayenne. While the salpicon is being eaten light the lamp under the blazer, put in the butter, green pepper, onion and bay leaf, cover and cook for two minutes; add the stock and stir until thickened; add the tomato and seasoning, stir and cook for a moment. Drop in the fish, put the hot water pan underneath, cover and let cook for five minutes.

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Very early next morning those of the fishermen who were about their tent in a state of perfect nudity. He had some light netting and rope thrown over his left shoulder, and passed on unconcerned to a little bar or refreshment stand, along which he waded out into the lake as far as he could and then swam out fifty feet further.

Throwing himself upon his back in the water he unfolded his net, and dexterously swung it before him. By a clever manipulation of the cords at

other end the net stretched itself to its full length, and formed a curtain some eight feet long, the upper side being floated by bits of wood.

Fastening the cords around his chest, the man swam ashore, his movements in the water being as quiet and easy as those of an eel. When he had drawn his net to land it contained twenty to thirty fish.

On another occasion two men were discovered swimming near a great school of fish. Each of the fish had the end of a net fastened to him, and they swam right through the shoal. Then they approached close to each other and made for the shore with some difficulty, owing to the weight of the fish in the net behind them. They were all of one edible variety and must have numbered 200, of an average weight of two pounds.

Another, the third method used, was the forcible hooking of fish by a small barbed gaff at the end of a long pole. This was generally practiced by men standing out in the water waist deep, and was apparently as effective as the other two methods. Of baiting hooks the men seem not to have heard, nor is there need for professional fishermen to bother with bait in water so bountifully stocked.

There was no angling for sport, and in particular no fly fishing. In fact, excepting for brown and ruffs, which were not large, the fish were all gross bottom feeders. The black fish, which appeared to be most plentiful and most valuable, were dark, scaleless things, something like the loach, but in general appearance, though not in color, great catfish a yard long lay in the mud or sand everywhere, and these were taken with the pole and hook.

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